

"Practical Worship Guidelines," Part 3 - 1 Corinthians 14:8-14 – February 14th, 2016

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series I've titled, "Practical Worship Guidelines."
- Up to this point the Apostle Paul has been very specific concerning his instructions to, and rebuke of, the Corinthian Christians.
- Namely, as it relates to their overemphasis of the gift of tongues, which only edifies self, at the expense of edifying the church.
- It's abundantly clear this was causing significant problems in the church, so much so that they had written Paul about this issue.
- It's for this reason from chapter seven on through the rest of this letter Paul is answering the questions they asked him about.
- I suppose you could rightly say that the gift of speaking in tongues was as much a controversy back in that day as it is today.

I want to recommend what I would argue is the best book I've ever read on this issue. It's by Pastor Chuck Smith, and it's titled, Charisma Versus Charismania. Quoting Pastor Chuck, "One of the areas of sharpest controversy within the body of Christ today involves speaking with other tongues, ... At one extreme are people who label any exercise of tongues as satanic. At the other extreme are people who declare that you are not filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit unless you speak with other tongues. They declare that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- Because we've spent considerable time addressing both sides of this prior, I'll simply say that neither is supported scripturally.
- In other words, neither tongues have ceased nor tongues is the only evidence of being baptized with the Holy Spirit are Biblical.
- That said, we still have a problem that needs to be resolved and it has to do with the overall worship service within the church.

1. Edify the church over self (Verses 1-4)

- Here Paul explains why prophecy is better than tongues, such that, it strengthens, encourages, comforts and edifies the church.

2. Eagerly desire the greater gift (Verses 5-7)

- Paul presents an explanation and an illustration using lifeless sounds of a pipe or harp that prophecy is greater than tongues.

3. Grasp the meaning of what is spoken (Verses 8-11)

- v8 Paul continues with his illustration using the sound of a trumpet not having a clear call for those to get ready for the battle.
- v9 He says they were speaking unintelligible words that nobody was able to understand and they were just speaking into the air.
- v10-11 He says all languages have meaning, but if they don't grasp it they become a foreigner to the speaker and visa-versa.

4. Excel in what builds up the church (Verses 12-14)

- v12 Paul says that since they are eager for the gifts of the Spirit, they should try to excel in those that will build up the church.
- v13 He says it's for this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may be able to interpret what they say.
- v14 Paul then goes on to say that if one prays in a tongue, their spirit may be praying, but their mind is unfruitful.
- I have to confess that I was tempted to go in a different direction with today's teaching and talk more about the gift of tongues.
- However, as I studied the text, the Lord ministered to me that I needed to paint the bigger picture of a church worship service.
- More specifically, that which should be the focus of a church worship service, whether or not these gifts are actually manifested.
- Simply put, the focus of a church worship service should be the worshipping and glorifying of God, which is edifying of the body.
- That's what the focus of a church worship service should be, but the question becomes one of how is the church worship to be.
- Thankfully, we have in scripture, what I like to call the "four legs" that the table of a church worship service is able to stand on.

Acts 2:42 - And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

- Notice that first and foremost, we're told how that the early church in Acts had "continued" steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.
- The reason I point this out is because it would seem to indicate that there was the possibility that the church wouldn't continue.
- This speaks to the paramount importance of teaching the sound doctrine of the Word of God, within the church worship service.
- Sadly, there's many a church today that's abandoned the teaching of God's Word and opted for emotional experience instead.
- One need look no further than to today's churches to see the consequences of what happens when God's Word is abandoned.
- I would suggest that this is what the church of Corinth had done, such that, they opted for what one calls a "soulish curiosity."

One commentator of this wrote, "It may satisfy curiosity to hear someone else speak in tongues, but it does not edify spiritually. We may think it is 'neat' to hear others speak in tongues, but that is more of a soulish curiosity than a spiritual edification."

I'll bring it to a close with one final quote from Pastor Chuck in Charisma Vs. Charismania, "Much of man's worship experience is more soulish than spiritual. Within typical church liturgy there is much that appeals to the soulish nature of man. The ornate robes, the choral chants, the candles and incense—all move me to a pleasant psychic experience of reverence. On the other end of the spectrum, the uncontrolled release of the emotions, with shouting, clapping, and dancing, moves other people to strong psychic experiences. It is possible that neither truly touches my spirit. In Hebrews 4:12 we read that the Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword, and is able to divide between the soul and the spirit. It is God's Word that ministers to the spirit of man and feeds the spirit. ... Often, hungry and sincere believers who sense a lack of power in their lives will go to their services with an open, hungry heart seeking God's power, but when they observe the absence of solid scriptural content and the presence of distasteful fleshly manifestations, they turn their backs on the whole valid and beautiful work of God's Spirit that a person can experience in his life."